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MUKHALINGAM TEMPLES

BY
DOUGLAS BARRETT

SIRPUR & RAJIM TEMPLES

BY
MORESHWAR G DIKSHIT

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Heritage of Indian Art Series 2 Mukhalingam, Sirpur, Rajim

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The Heritage of Indian Art Series deals with monuments and sites which are off the beaten track and rarely visited by the tourist, but are nevertheless vital for the understanding and appreciation of Indian art

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Douglas Barrett

DESCRIPTION OF PLATES

NO Indian dynasty has had a longer or more distinguished history than the various branches of that known as the Eastern Gangas The more famous line is the one which is sometimes called the " Greater " or " Imperial " Gangas, who came to power about 900 A D and ruled until the early 15th century A D At first this dynasty controlled from its capital of Kalinganagara that part of northern Andhradesa and southern Orissa which is known as Kalinga It was not until the 12th century A D that the greatest of the Eastern Ganga kings, Anantavarman Chodaganga (1078-1150 A D), having defeated the Somavamsi king of Orissa, extended his power from Visakhapatnam district to the Mahanadi Henceforth the Ganga king was known as " Lord of Utkala " (Orissa) as well as " Lord of Trikalinga" It is their association with the architectural glories of Orissa which has made the names of these kings household words for the student of Indian art The Meghesvara, the Ananta Vasudeva and many other temples at Bhubanesvar, the Jagannatha at Puri and the Sun Temple at Konarak were either erected or embellished by their direct patronage or that of their subjects

These great artistic achievements are surpassed however in quality, if not in size, by those of the earlier and lesser known branch of the Gangas These Early Eastern Gangas were confined to a small territory in northern Andhradesa, and little is known of them beyond the series of names of kings given in their charters They seem to have commenced their era about 496 A D , and their records come to an end just before 900 A D , just in fact about the date of the rise of the Greater Gangas The exact relationship between the two branches of the family is vague, but one thing is certain — they both had their capital at Kalinganagara

The identification of Kalinganagara with the modern village of Mukhalingam was first made by the distinguished Telugu scholar G V Ramamurti who wrote an account of a visit in 1893 Since his day few references have been made to the site of the ancient capital a neglect the more unaccountable since it contains what is perhaps the most important early medieval temple in the whole of Andhradesa It receives, for example, merely passing notice in Percy Brown's *Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu)*

Mukhalingam is a well-known place of pilgrimage in Parlakimedi taluk, Ganjam district It stands on the left bank of the Vamsadhara river about twenty miles from the town of Parlakimedi The village and river have a quiet beauty of their own, and there are fine views towards the Eastern Ghats Apart from the temples to be described here there are numerous antiquities scattered in the village and along the path to Nagarikatakam, a small village two miles away, whose name itself is presumably a reminiscence of the ancient Kalinganagara

Of the three ancient temples in Mukhalingam, the most important and the earliest is that known as the Mukhalingesvara The many inscriptions on the temple make it clear that its ancient name, or rather the name of the lingam which it enshrines, was Madhukesvara At present full justice cannot be done to this magnificent temple since so much of the surface is covered with stucco When this is removed and many essential and urgent repairs carried out, the Mukhalingesvara will undoubtedly take its place as one of the finest temples in India

The temple which faces east is surrounded by a high wall (prakara), in which are two gateways, one in the south wall, the other — the main gate in the east (Plate 1) As one passes through the east gate, which is covered with stucco, one enters a sort of a vestibule containing a large Nandi shrine The vestibule is separated from the compound proper by a second gate This also is partially obscured by stucco, so that its architectural form is not apparent, but some magnificent sculptures can be seen On the east face the gate is made up of three recessed jambs and lintels At the base of the innermost jambs which are clean and sharp, are female dvarapalas, that on the left being four-armed (Plate 2), and that on the right two-armed with a chauri Above each dvarapala are three panels (Plates 3-5) of superbly characterised rishis Each panel is a masterpiece The innermost lintel shows a seated figure holding two great unfurling scrolls The carving of the scrolls, like all the decorative sculpture on the temple, is of the highest quality Its only European rival for precision and imaginative design would be the so-called " peopled scrolls " of the Early Roman Empire Of the two outer members of the gate

only the lintels are clean of stucco The lower is a frieze of flying figures, the upper a frieze of warriors with a centre projecting panel of a seated figure (Siva?) flanked by female chauri-bearers The western face of the gate is heavily obscured, but there are some fine small sculptures on the lintel (Plate 6) and a good erotic panel on the right jamb

The visitor now passes through the gate into the compound proper The temple is of the *panchayatana* type, that is, there are four minor shrines at the corners of the compound Though the sikhara and garbhagriha of the main temple are completely covered with stucco, it is clear that the shape of the sikhara resembles the type known as pidha in Orissa, which is characterised by a pyramidal roof of receding steps In Orissa however pidhas are only used to roof the mandapam The sikhara of the Mukhalingesvara however has a curving profile toward the heavy amalaka A cleaner version of this type may be seen on the Bhimesvara temple (Plate 38) To the shrine, which contains a rough unpolished lingam, is attached a flat-roofed mandapam supported by two rows of three pillars each, plain and without capitals The doors of the shrine and mandapam both face east, though there is a second door in the south wall of the mandapam, which receives additional lighting from two small grilles in its north wall At the four corners of the mandapam are small sikharas, as in the mandapam of the Vaital Deul at Bhubanesvar and of the same type, though with heavier amalakas The outer walls of the mandapam are plastered, but the sculptured niches which follow all round are for the most part clean They contain a wonderful series of images of subordinate deities (parsva-devatas), of which several are illustrated here (Plates 8-11) The Mahishasuramardini and the Nataraja are exceptionally fine Even finer are the two doors to the mandapam The door facing east may well claim even in its present condition* to be the loveliest entrance to a temple in the whole of India The two inner jambs are carved with foliage scrolls of amazing complexity (Plate 13) As the light plays on the shallow cut surface of the stone, the curving tendrils seem to flow and pulse with a life of their own Below the scrolls are four-armed dvarapalas (Plate 17) leading on the

* It is partially plastered and obscured by a modern pillar supporting the insecure lintel

trident which, as in similar sculptures in the Western Deccan, issues from the head of a dwarf The outer jambs are similarly treated, except that there are set at intervals within the foliage exquisite amorous groups and girls embracing branches of trees (Plates 12-, 14, 15) Above the door runs a long and intricate figured frieze of unidentified subject, supported by pilasters on which are represented male dvarapalas standing in a vase and foliage ornament On the capitals of the pilasters are carved lion masks flanked by rampant lions (Plate 16) Flanking the door itself are the river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna (Plate 18) On the south door, which is more simply designed, we find the same quality of carving (Plates 19-21) The female dvarapalas (Plate 19) and the " peopled scrolls " (Plate 21) are especially noteworthy

The sikharas of the four subsidiary shrines (Plate 22) are of the early type of the Parasuramesvara and Sisiresvara Temples at Bhubanesvar and the Simhanatha Temple at Baramba Here again the decorative and figural carving is magnificent (Plates 23-25), and each shrine has a lovely door Animals are treated with the same delicate and loving observation as the human figure (Plate 7) Mention should also be made of a finely composed gargoyle in the form of a naga (Plate 26) It once decorated the roof of the mandapam, but now stands beside the main shrine

There are over a hundred inscriptions in old Nagari on the Mukhalingesvara Temple All record gifts to the temple, and most date from the time of Anantavarman Chodaganga, though one records a gift of the queen of his grandfather Vajrahasta Anantavarman (1038-70 A D) The temple is of course much earlier than this It is comparable in style with the small early group of temples at Bhubanesvar of the Bhauma or Kara dynasty, which came to power, in our opinion, about 750 A D Of this group the Parasuramesvara may be dated about 750 A D and the Vaital Deul and Sisiresvara perhaps fifty years later On grounds of style and iconography, the Mukhalingesvara stands between the two Bhubanesvar monuments, and may therefore be dated to the second half of the 8th century A D

The second early temple, which stands at the entrance of the village is the Somesvara (Plate 27) Though obviously a temple of

considerable size, only the shrine now remains It is however clean and in good condition, and the subtle articulation of the wall spaces, the strong, simple mouldings, and noble propostions can be appreciated Unlike the Mukhalingesvara this temple faces west The shrine is of the type known in Orissa as tri-ratha, that is, a projection in the centre of each face divides the wall space into three, which gives room for a large niche and two smaller flanking niches The centre niches are occupied by figures of Mahishasura-mardini (North Side), Karttikeya (East Side) (Plate 29) and Ganesa (South Side) (Plate 28) The smaller niches contain forms of Lakulisa and Siva (Plates 30-31) The Ardhanarisvara is an especially lovely conception The small panels which frame the niches contain a host of lovely things, many of which are masterpieces in miniature, though the decorative carving has lost the wonderful freshness and invention of the earlier temple (Plates 32-33) The doorway on the west is simply designed A frieze of the Nine Planets, with below a panel of Gaja-Lakshmi, forms the lintel The jambs are decorated with vertical " peopled " and decorative scrolls At the base of the jambs are four-armed male dvarapalas of good style (Plate 36) In the niches on either side of the door are figures of the river-goddesses, Yamuna and Ganga (Plates 34-35) The four central projections of the sikhara itself are finely conceived, and contain panels of Surya, Lakulisa and Siva The shrine contains a large polished lingam

The Somesvara Temple contains no inscription, and must also be dated by style It is somewhat earlier than the Muktesvara Temple at Bhubanesvar, which represents the beginning of the fully developed Orissan architectural style The Muktesvara is usually dated about 950-75 A D This is perhaps rather too late, and the Somesvara may be placed in the second half of the 9th century A D , about a hundred years later than its superb predecessor, the Mukhalingesvara

The third and final temple to be described is the Bhimesvara, situated some two hundred yards from the Mukhalingesvara It consists of a shrine and a mandapam with an intervening ardha-mandapam, and faces East It is a plain structure, and its main interest lies in the form and decoration of the shrine (Plate 38)

The sikhara is of the type already described as resembling the pidha deul of Orissa On the three outer faces of the garbhagriha are inserted panels of Brahma (North) (Plate 37), Dakshinamurti (South) and Narasimha (West) There are two smaller panels on the outer walls of the ardhamandapam — Ganesa (South) and Mahishasuramardini (North) It is clear from the style of these sculptures that this is the latest of the three ancient temples at Mukhalingam There are a dozen or so inscriptions on the temple Most are of the Gajapati period, but a few record donations of the time of Anantavarman Chodaganga In these inscriptions the temple is referred to as the Aniyanka-Bhimesvara Now, this was a name of the Ganga King Vajrahasta II, who ruled from about 982 A D to 1016 A D , and the Bhimesvara may well have been built by him In any case the style of the sculpture suggests a date at the beginning of the 11th century A D

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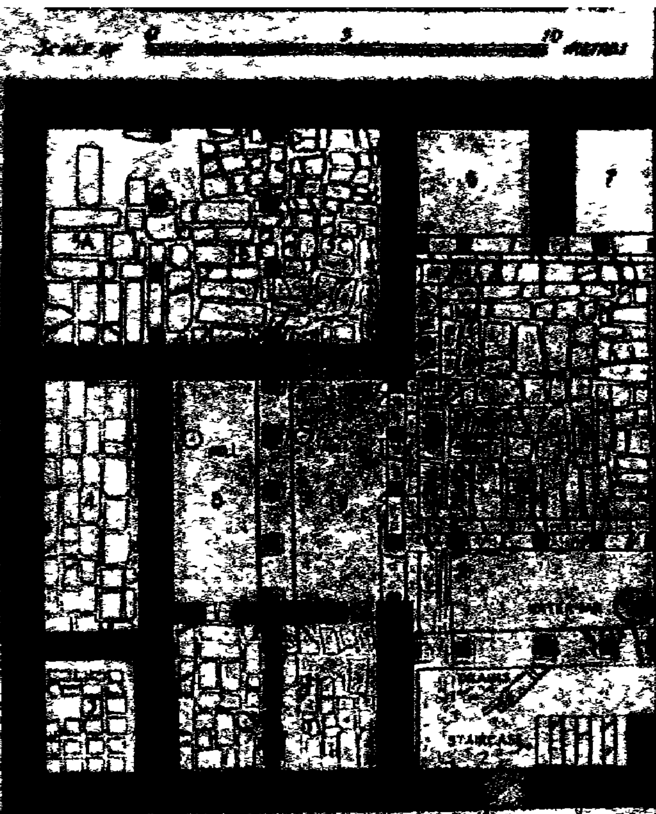
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The Temples of Sirpur



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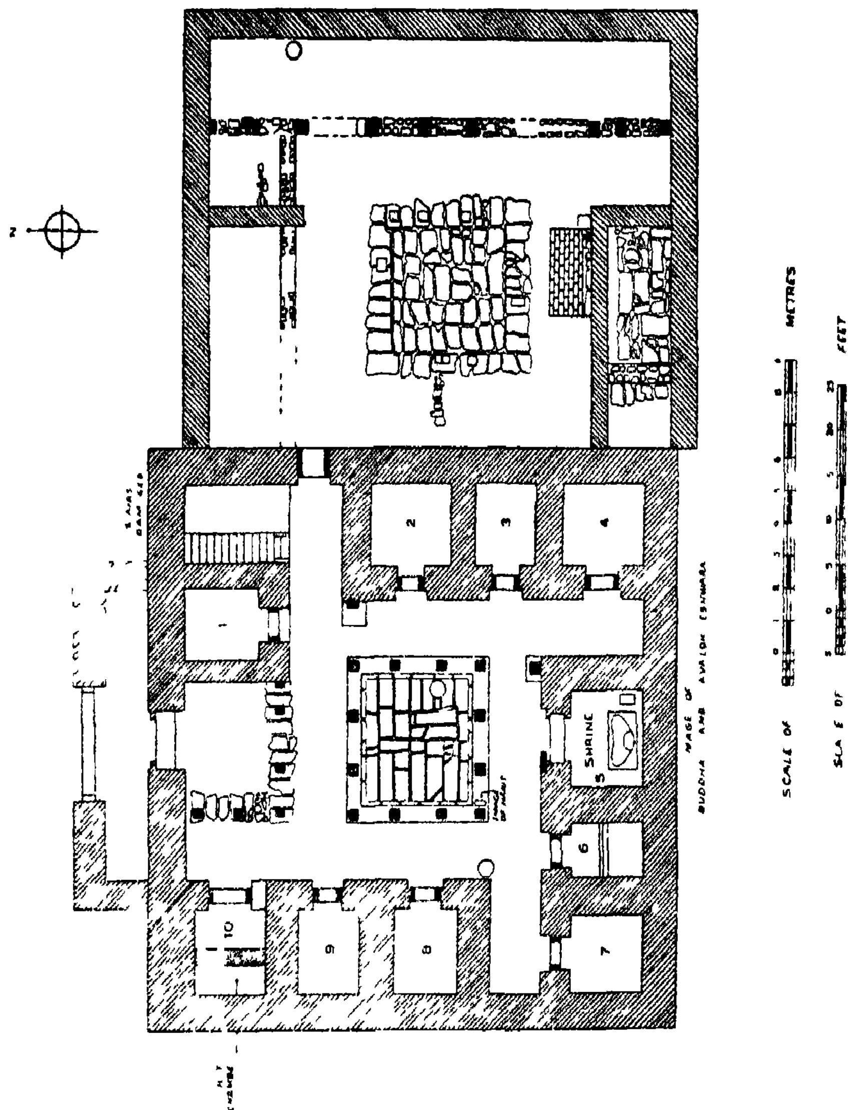
DESCRIPTION OF PLATES



SIRPUR 1955

BUDDHIST VIHARAS

SIRPUR 1956 SWASTIKA MONASTERY



SIRPUR is a small village on the banks of the Mahanadi in the Mahasamund taluka of the Raipur district in Madhya Pradesh Its situation in the midst of thick forests in Chhattisgadh makes it difficult of approach, for the forest tracts are not negotiable for a considerable part of the year From the 6th to the 10th century A D , however, it was a city of considerable importance, and became under its ancient name of Sripura, a capital of the Pandavas of Dakshina Kosala and their predecessors, the Kings of Sarabhapura The vestiges of this prosperous city are now represented by a series of mounds which extend over three miles around the village, a few inscriptions and a comparatively well preserved temple of Lakshmana, which is considered to be unique in the brick architecture of India Some of the mounds recently excavated indicate that Sirpur was also an important centre of Mahayana Buddhism

Much of the early history of Mahakoshala is still obscure Until about the 4th century A D , very few records have survived in the region to give us a connected account of its rulers This is mainly because a sparse population and large forests were the characteristic features of the region in ancient times as they are now King Mahendra of Mahakoshala, said to have been defeated by Samudragupta, the great ruler of the Imperial Gupta family (335-375 A D) is still only a name , yet it is significant that cultural influences of the Classical tradition were already reaching this secluded region In about the 5th century A D , the Nalas, who probably hailed from the eastern border of Bastar with their capital at Pushkari, had extended their power into Vidarbha They were destroyed by the Vakataka ruler Prithvishena , but the existence of a late vassal named Vilastunga is indicated by a long inscription at Rajim, dated tentatively about 700 A D The region around Raipur was for some time under the so-called rulers of Sarabhapura whom palaeographic evidence places between 500 A D and 600 A D Early records of this family have been found in the vicinity of Raipur, but it soon had to shift into the conquered territories of Orissa, its place being taken by another powerful family known as the Pandavas of Dakshina Koshala The Pandavas were northern in origin and some members of the family were matrimonially connected with the Maukharis of Magadha A distinguished ruler

of this family, Mahasivagupta Balarjuna, had a fairly long reign of 57 years and did much to develop his capital at Sripura His reign towards the middle of the 8th century A D constitutes the golden period in the art of Mahakoshala, and the many cities along the banks of the Mahanadi were centres of creative activity

The erection of brick-built temples and a revival of Mahayana Buddhism seem to be the outstanding features of his reign Examples of the former have survived at Kharod, Pujaripali, Seori-Narayan and Rajim in addition to Sirpur, all in the basin of the Mahanadi Being off the beaten track, these monuments have suffered much less than their prototypes in Northern India The spread of Buddhism can be attributed to royal patronage, and nearly all the relics of Buddhism found in Mahakoshala belong to the Pandava regime Hiuen-Tsang, the famous Chinese pilgrim of the 7th century A D , visited the capital of Dakshina Koshala where he found the ruler favourable towards Buddhism Though not expressly stated by name, it is more or less certain that the capital was none other than Sirpur It is probable that the pilgrim was attracted towards Sirpur by the fame of that place Many Buddhist monasteries have now been located in Sirpur and the art of casting bronze images required in worship also seems to have been practised there, for many superb examples of this art have been found Sirpur was thus the centre from which the forms of the post-Gupta School of sculpture seem to have been diffused throughout the Mahakoshala Simplicity and grandeur, clearness of design and decorative invention, these are the keynotes of Pandava art

The best example of the architecture of the period is the Lakhshmana Temple at Sirpur This temple, originally dedicated to Vishnu, was constructed by Vasata, Queen Mother of Mahasivagupta towards the close of the 7th century A D It stands on a high stone platform, approached, from the eastern end by a double flight of steps (Plate 39) The temple consisted of a square sanctum with an oblong mandapa in front The latter is now completely ruined Apart from the pillars in the mandapa and the door-frame of the sanctum which are in stone, the entire temple is built of brick The outer walls of the sanctum are elaborately decorated with chaitya-arch-motif and vase-shaped

mouldings at the base Of special interest are the three false windows at the back and side walls of the shrine, imitating wood-work and enriched with minute details, all in the difficult medium of brick (Plate 40) The temple had a double cornice decorated with rows of chaitya arches, set against a band of check pattern with alternately hollowed squares , this gives a very pleasing effect of light and shadow Introduced at the corners are some charming figures of roaring lions and kichakas The sikhara consisted of a number of mouldings decorated with the chaitya-arch-motif, interspersed with pillar-like struts in between each arch A corbelled triangular opening, in the front wall of the sanctum, which probably stood above the flat roof of the adjoining mandapa, is an interesting feature (It is also noticed in the temples at Pujaripali and Kharod) The roof of the sikhara has fallen but was probably flat and adorned with an amalaka (The present roof, a reconstruction, gives an entirely false idea of the original shape) The interior of the sanctum is plain and the inside of the sikhara has the appearance of an encased stepped pyramid, with the bricks jutting out at regular intervals The entire brickwork appears to have been bolstered up for chiselling, done with remarkable accuracy as to retain the sharpness of outline and then rubbed down to a smooth plane in order to avoid any traces of joints Their appearance therefore is that of a solid mass without the patchy effect characteristic of brickwork When plastered the effect was more pleasing than now , traces of plaster have remained at places and a sample showed as many as 32 layers of white-washing

The most outstanding feature of the temple, however, is the massive door-frame in stone which adorns the entrance to the sanctum (Plates 41-45) It is comprised of four broad mouldings profusely decorated with sculptured panels and foliate designs The innermost moulding forming the jambs and the lintel of the proper doorway are decorated with rich scroll-work The inner sides of the door-jambs contain on each a large sized lotus very delicately carved, whereas the bases on the outer side are devoted to two large panels containing makaras with foliate tails The centre of the lintel contains a large sized amalaka, flanked with winged horses and decorative scrolls, extending to the voluted

corner of the jambs devoted to pot and creeper design of great artistic merit

The lintel of the second moulding is almost entirely devoted to a large sleeping figure of Anantasayana Vishnu, with the usual attendant figures of devas and gandharvas Lakshmi is seen seated at his feet and Brahma is shown issuing from his navel Though very bold in conception, many details of this interesting figure are now lost Most remarkable however are the sculptured panels which adorn the right and the left-hand sides of the vertical mouldings The topmost panels on either side are devoted to salabhanjikas, the central ones to mithunas and lower most panels represent the ganas or dwarfs Being well preserved it is in these that we are able to appreciate the great beauty of Pandava art, assured and free from convention With their elongated faces, graceful pose and lovely limbs, these figures enhance the general effect of the door-frame, which otherwise would have been very heavy on account of the tapestry-like band of panels at the border The loving couples in the central panels are especially fine in execution and delicate in sentiment The trees that surround them are full of playful monkeys, perching parrots, shy squirrels and even a bat with its head dangling down

The outermost moulding has as its inner border the pot and foliage motif, similar to the border of the inner door-frame, while its broader faces are devoted to seven panels on each side Much of the carving on the left-hand side as well as on the panels on the lintel is now lost , but sufficient remains on the right-hand side to indicate that they depicted the ten incarnations of Vishnu The other panels seem to depict battle-scenes, but cannot now be identified

The mandapa of the temple was supported on rows of pillars and pilasters which divided its floor space into three equal parts , but much of it is now fallen, save the side walls which are preserved to a negligible height On one of the pilasters on the left-hand side is seen the representation of Surya with his seven horses and the chariot, but it is not known if this originally belonged to the mandapa or if it was brought from elsewhere, as are some sculptures now preserved in the Lakshmana Temple Since the Lakshmana Temple was originally dedicated to Vishnu, there is a good chance

that the exceptionally fine figure of that deity still in the temple (Plate 46) was originally enshrined there Both this figure and the lovely Naga (Plate 47) will remind the visitor of the masterpieces in the corner shrines in the Rajiva Lochana Temple at Rajim The Vishnu, now in the Gandhavesvara at Sirpur, is of the same style and equal beauty (Plate 48)

Very little is known about the brick architecture in India prior to about 4th century A D The Lakshmana Temple, together with the temple at Bhitargaon in the Kanpur district, afford some interesting points of study and may be regarded as intermediary stages between the terraced style of brick temples of the Pala period found at Ahichchhatra, Nalanda and Paharpur in the 10th and 11th centuries A D and the earlier temples of the Gupta period

Excavations at Sirpur have brought to light two more brick temples, both dedicated to the Buddha and venerated by the Buddhist monks staying in Sirpur Though both temples were adopted from the Chatushkika form of monastery, i e having cells around a central courtyard with intervening verandahs, each differs in its plan In one, known as the "Swastika Monastery", the temple consisted of a series of rooms arranged at the end of a swastika-shaped verandah around the courtyard (Plan) A small porch was provided The main image (Plate 53) was enshrined in the room at the farthest end beyond the court facing the porch and the rest of the rooms were used as cells for the accommodation of monks

The other temple, known as the Main Temple, is rectangular in plan, and provided with an elaborate gateway beyond the main porch, adorned with tall dvarapalas and yaksha figures (Plates 50-52) The central court, which was open to the sky was bordered with sixteen massive stone pillars, as if in the sabhamandapa of a temple, and the shrine lay in the centre of the suite of rooms at the back A number of rooms flanked the court beyond the verandah on all the four sides The temple thus combined in it the architectural features of both a temple and a monastery

Both temples contained large-sized images of the Buddha in bhumisparsa-mudra, seated on high pedestals and with the usual attendants Avalokitesvara and Vajrapani , the latter are often

missing from their pedestals The porches of both these temples were double-storeyed and both were provided with secret chambers for storing the valuables belonging to the respective establishments Both of them were provided with a smaller annexe for further accommodation of the monks

According to an inscription discovered in the excavation of the Main Temple, it was built during the reign of Mahasivagupta and the refectory there was donated by Bhikshu Anandaprabha In addition, this temple also contained a large-sized image of Ganga at the left of the shrine entrance and that of Jambhala in a niche-shrine in its vestibule

The colossal images from these temples are noteworthy as they are built up from separate pieces placed one upon another — an unusual feature in Indian sculpture The soft sandstone in which the figures are cut wears easily and does not retain the original sharpness of the carving But where well-preserved the sculptures show a remarkable sense of beauty and faithfulness to detail These qualities of the Pandava artist can be better seen when he is working in a harder material of good quality, particularly in the miniature figures of which a few examples were recovered The best of these is a green chlorite schist image of Manjusri (Plate 54) A large number of bronze images have also been discovered at Sirpur Their local manufacture can be inferred from the goldsmith's tools recovered from the excavation — pincers, tongs, tripods, crucibles, touchstone and other accessories — and also from the discarded pieces Manufactured by the *cire perdue* process the bronzes reveal an extraordinary skill, particularly in the work of Dronaditya, a master-smith whose name is carved on some of the pieces His work ranks among the finest things produced by the Pandava artists No better examples can be cited than his image of Tara (Plate 56) or that of another Manjusri, set with miniature jewels (Plate 58) To accentuate the life-like effect many of the bronze images are shown with silver eyes, copper lips in imitation of their natural colour, and even with the garments of figures occasionally indicated in contrasting colours with copper, gold and silver inlays

The art of the Pandava period seems to have been influenced by well-known centres of culture like Nalanda The architectural

features, such as the plans of the two temples, provision in them for secret chambers and stairs for the storey above the porch, are all to be found in the monasteries at Nalanda and seem to imitate them with advantage In the plastic arts also the Pandava artists owe much to the style of North Bihar The Pandava rulers were after all connected with Magadha, and it is not unlikely that they themselves were responsible for transplanting to the soil of Mahakoshala the rich cultural heritage with which they were familiar in their earlier home

The sudden infiltration of a foreign power with a new set of ideas must have been a rare experience in a secluded region like Chhattisgadh This alien culture therefore does not seem to have taken root except for a short period Excavations have shown that not long after the Pandavas, the Buddhist monasteries at Sirpur were occupied by a people of the Saiva faith, who beheaded many of the Buddhist images and perhaps spared others because by their time the Buddha was already regarded as an avatara by the Hindu fold In the paucity of written records it is impossible to say who these people were but their contribution to sculpture was of no intrinsic merit

The art of the Pandava period died with its rulers, and it needed the spade of the archaeologist to uncover its glory Its contribution to the history of Indian art may have been of short duration, but it was a unique and lively moment But in so far as regional factors are concerned it is a good example of how beauty finds expression under favourable conditions however brief lived the experience be

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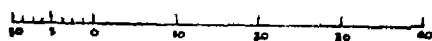
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6th century

7th century

12th century

Modern



The Temples of Rajim



Moreshwar G Dikshit

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RAJIM is a small pretty village situated near the confluence of the river Pairi with the Mahanadi, in the Raipur district of Madhya Pradesh It is nearly 32 miles from Raipur, to which it is connected by a well-metalled road

Rajim derives its name from the temple of Rajiva Lochana, the Fair-eyed One, a sacred name of Vishnu In a group of several temples the Rajiva Lochana still attracts thousands of pilgrims every year and is held in great veneration by the local people. There are legends which connect it with a female oil miller called Rajib Not far from the Rajiva Lochana is another important temple dedicated to Ramachandra

Though comparatively well-known on account of their easy access, these temples have been little studied Beyond a few early notices and a recent survey they do not seem to have attracted any attention, and thus their importance for the study of the art and architecture of Mahakoshala has not been properly understood

The early history of Rajim is closely linked with that of Mahakoshala We are not in a position to say anything of its past until about the 5th century A D , but the numerous records of the Sarabhapura kings found in the neighbourhood of Raipur indicate that the region was conquered by these rulers sometime in the 5th century A D Sarabha, the founder of the dynasty, and his son Narendra (*circa* 500 A D) were vassals of the Imperial Gupta family Their successors perhaps owed allegiance to the Vakataka kings of Vidarbha The Sarabhapuriyas were ousted from their capital Sripura (modern Sirpur) by the Pandava kings of Dakshina Koshala There is a record in the Rajiva Lochana Temple dated about 700 A D which speaks of a small family called the Nalas, which probably infiltrated into the region after the extinction of the Pandavas The dark period in the history of the region continues until about the 12th century A D when we hear of a hero called Jagapala or Jayasimha, who together with his ancestors seems to have helped considerably in establishing the rulers of the Ratanpur branch of the Kalachuri dynasty

These phases in the history of Mahakoshala are vital for the study of the temple architecture and sculpture because each of them

seems to have left its mark on the temples at Rajim All the important art traditions in Mahakoshala seem to be represented here To distinguish these individually from the mass of renovations through the centuries is not an easy task but is nevertheless fascinating and necessary

The Rajiva Lochana belongs to the panchayatana class of temple in which the main temple is surrounded by four subsidiary shrines at the four corners of the compound (prakara) At present only three of these four shrines (deulikas) are enclosed in a spacious walled compound, while the place of the fourth is taken up by modern encroachment These small shrines, which have themselves undergone several changes are dedicated to Badrinath (Vishnu), Vamana, Varaha and Narasimha The last has been completely remodelled during recent years

The main temple of Rajiva Lochana (Plate 83) stands on a high platform about 8 ft high and measures 69 ft × 43 ft It faces west overlooking the river The temple proper measured about 59 ft × 25½ ft and consists of a square sanctum (garbhagriha), a vestibule (antarala) with a mandapam (37¾ ft × 71 ft) in front Two flights of steps at the northwest and southwest corners of the platform lead to the mandapam through two small elaborately decorated side-doors

The mandapam and its adjuncts seem to have undergone three (or perhaps four) successive changes Initially this flat-roofed structure was open on all its three sides and was supported by two rows of six pillars in the centre and probably by similar ones at the sides The central pillars which are coeval with the original building of the mandapam consist of square stone columns, plain at the base and profusely decorated with rich ornament and scroll-work at the top, indicative of the influence of post-Gupta art Inscriptions in large shell characters, all pilgrim records, preserved on some of them indicate a period not far removed from the Gupta period and roughly corresponding to the rule of the Sarabhapuriyas in Mahakoshala

During the next stage the most significant improvement in the mandapam was the building of the side walls and the introduction

of pilasters in place of the old square columns These pilasters are adorned with life-size sculptures of deities and attendants, which bear a close resemblance to the sculpture from Sirpur, and in their plastic qualities seem to be a work of the Pandava period (Plates 62 and 63) It was also during this period that the doors at the top of the two flights of steps leading to the mandapam were provided and the door of the main shrine repaired This massive doorway (Plates 59-61) consists of three broad mouldings which are very heavily ornamented, with scroll-work on the innermost moulding, panels of mithunas over lotus stems on the second and the outermost devoted to gracefully intertwined Nagas The top of the lintel is devoted to a sculpture of Garuda-Vahana Vishnu, with attendants, ganas and musicians

In the third stage of the renovation of the temple, a wall was built on the edge of the original platform thus forming a circum-ambulatory passage, which was left open to the sky Additional doorways were provided in the walls of the mandapam , and two adjuncts were added to the platform itself which served as stores or bhandaras to the temple It is also probable that two large inscribed slabs, which are extraneous to the temple were then embedded in the walls to preserve them

As to the original sikhara of the temple little can be said Its present shape, a square pyramid with curved sides and tapering chaitya-windows in five tiers on each face and small pinnacles at the corners, does not seem to be coeval with the original date of the building of the temple and may belong to the Kalachuri period At any rate the heavy conical kalasha and the miniature shrines surmounting the roof of the mandapam are comparatively recent and are incongruous with the general scheme of the temple

Other changes effected during the regime of the Pandava rulers seem to be the repairs to the corner shrines We have no means of ascertaining their original design, but it seems that the ornamented doorways of the deulikas were constructed during this period But by far the most significant addition was the building of a wall around the prakara and the introduction of a new gateway in front of the temple (Plates 67-71) Its massive door-frame has

on its lintel a sleeping figure of Vishnu (Ananta-Sayana) (Plate 82) with a Garuda at the base attended by Nagas in bowing attitude, their bodies terminating in graceful coils The jambs of this door-frame are decorated with foliated designs which show the vitality characteristic of the Pandava period The inner mouldings of the jambs are treated with figures of serpents and amorous couples which show the lively imagination of the artist The outer mouldings contain several loving couples in long panels and Nagas in the attitude of prayer The play of light shows the subtle variations in depth of cutting, and the additional panels on either side of the door add solidarity to the general design The charming effect produced by this impressive doorway however is now marred by the introduction of two pillars of a different style, which seem to have been placed there in the Kalachuri or some later period These pillars are decorated with large flaccid serpent coils above tall dvarapalas in the chapeta-mudra (Plate 67) The coarse, swollen limbs of the dvarapalas and the crude treatment of the snakes make a striking contrast to the work of the earlier period on the main door

The muddled effect produced by the mixing of several styles at different periods is carried further in the temple by several modern encroachments The northwest corner of the spacious courtyard is now occupied by private houses , the sculptures in the mandapam and elsewhere have been disfigured by indiscriminate use of Portland cement and by recutting missing or damaged parts of the sculptures Despite this, several pieces are intact, and are of the highest quality

The image of Vamana in the southeast shrine of the prakara is a superb example of the art of the Sarabhapuriyas (Plate 72) This magnificent group shows great plastic quality, and particularly in the headdress of the standing figure of Bali, reveals the influence of the Gupta school No less fine are the figures in the other three subsidiary shrines — the Narasimha (Plates 74 - 75), Vishnu (Plate 73) and Trivikrama

Another figure, of Trivikrama, carelessly inserted in the compound wall near the northern entrance to the prakara, also

deserves mention because of the unusual treatment of a familiar subject (Plates 76 - 77) Forceful, yet well poised, this sculpture shows Adisesha in the act of making obeisance to the standing figure of Vishnu Trivikrama, whose right leg lifted high is shown crushing the ugly face of Brahmanda (The right leg below the knee is modern)

Amongst the sculptures of the Pandava period attention may be drawn to the fine acrobatic figure in low relief on the doors at the top of the steps to the mandapam of the main temple (Plates 64 - 66) The figures among the decorative tendrils show the fantasy of the artist

Perhaps the most interesting stages in the mature development of Pandava art are to be found in the Ramachandra Temple, near to the Rajiva Lochana Temple This temple, like the Rajiva Lochana, has undergone several structural changes but sufficient remains in its mandapam to show how beautiful the original temple must have been This Temple preserves nearly all the original pillars and pilasters of its mandapam , the few additions can easily be detected

First constructed during the Pandava period, this temple was repaired by a certain Jayasimha during the regime of the Kalachuris of Ratanpur Though the inscription, now embedded in the wall of the mandapam of the Rajiva Lochana Temple, expressly states that the temple was "built" by Jayasimha, it is certain that the construction did not go beyond the re-enshrinement of the deity in its shrine and a few minor repairs to the mandapam, such as the insertion of some new columns (Plate 81) and the provision of a circumambulatory passage like its counterpart in the Rajiva Lochana Temple

The mandapam of this temple, with which we are primarily concerned, has all its pilasters and pillars carved with life-size figures of Salabhanjikas, flower-bearers, and amorous couples, and attendant deities (Plates 78 - 80) Two pillars at the eastern entrance are decorated with two sculptures on each set at a right angle — an arresting design These sculptures in poise, grace

and decoration are superb productions of the period Specially noteworthy is a figure standing under an Asoka tree and holding a wreath of flowers on a lotus leaf (Plate 79) Of rare beauty are two maidens depicted on one and the same pillar at the left-hand side of the entrance In another figure of Ganga (Plate 80) with the characteristic halo behind her head and with her vahana, the makara, depicted on the pedestal, we see the type of beauty acceptable in the Pandava period

The pillars of a later date introduced at the farther end of the mandapam are quite distinctive (Plate 81), being octagonal in shape and surmounted by ghata-shaped capitals but they do not seem to approach the mature conception and grace of the Pandava artists

The following may be consulted

Alexander Cunningham, Archaeological Survey of India, Vol XVII, 1884

Epigraphia Indica, Vols XXVI & XXXI

Indian Historical Quarterly, Vol XIX

V V Mirashi, "The Pandava Dynasty of Mekala" INDICA, Silver Jubilee Volume, Indian Historical Research Institute, St Xavier's College, Bombay

Odette Viennot, "Le Temple de Ramchandra à Rajim", Arts Asiatiques, Tome V Fasc 2 1958

Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum Vol IV

MUKHALINGAM

Plates 1 – 38

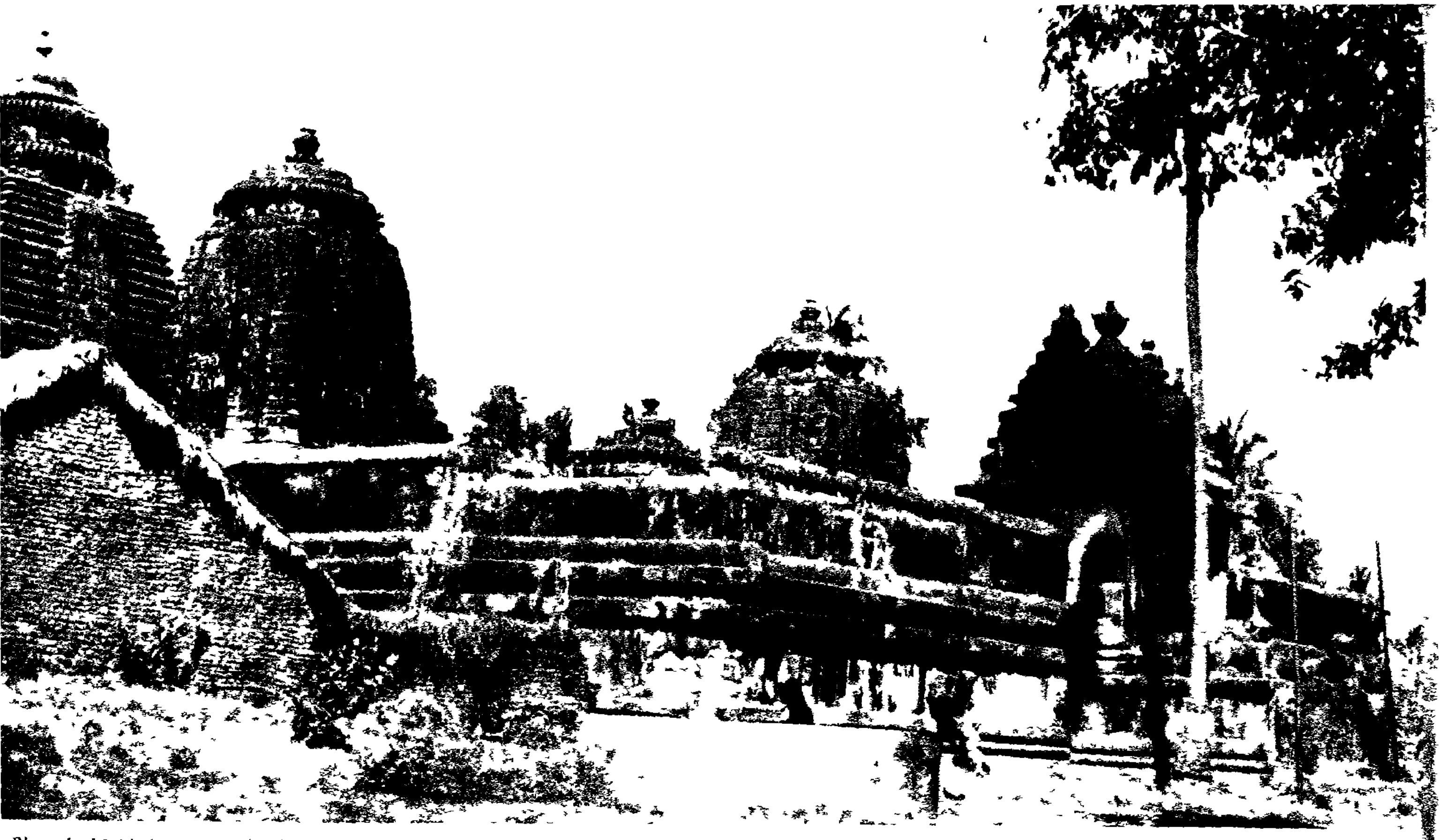


Plate 1 Mukhalingam Mukhalingeswara General view from S. E.



Plate 2 Mukhalingam Mukhalingesvara Second gate Female dvarapala



Plate 5 Mukhalingam Mukhalingesvara Second gate Rishis



Plate 4 Mukhalingam Mukhalingeswara Second gate Rishis



Plate 5 Mukhalingam Mukhalingeswara Second gate Rishis



Plate 6 Mahabalipuram [illegible]



Plate 7 Mukhalingam Mukhalingesvara N W Shrine Detail of door



Plate 8 Mukhalingam Mukhalingeswara Outer wall of mandapam Ganesa



Plate 9 Mukhalingam Mukhalingesvara Outer wall of mandapam India



Plate 10 Mukhalingam Mukhalingesvara Outer wall of mandapam Mahishasuramardini



Plate 11 Mukhalingam Mukhalingesvara Outer wall of mandapam Nataraja



Plate 12 Mukhalingam Mukhalingeswara Last door of main temple



Plate 13 Mukhalingam Mukhalingesvara East door of main temple



Plate 14 Mukhalingam Mukhalingesvara Last door of main temple



Plate 15 Mukhalingam Mukhalingesvara East door of main temple



Plate 16 Mukhalingam Mukhalingesvara East door of main temple



Plate 17 Mukhalingam Mukhalingeswara East door of main temple Dvarapala



Plate 18 Mukhalingam Mukhalingeswara Panel to right of east door River goddess



Plate 19 Mukhalingam Mukhalingesvara South door of main temple Female dvarapala

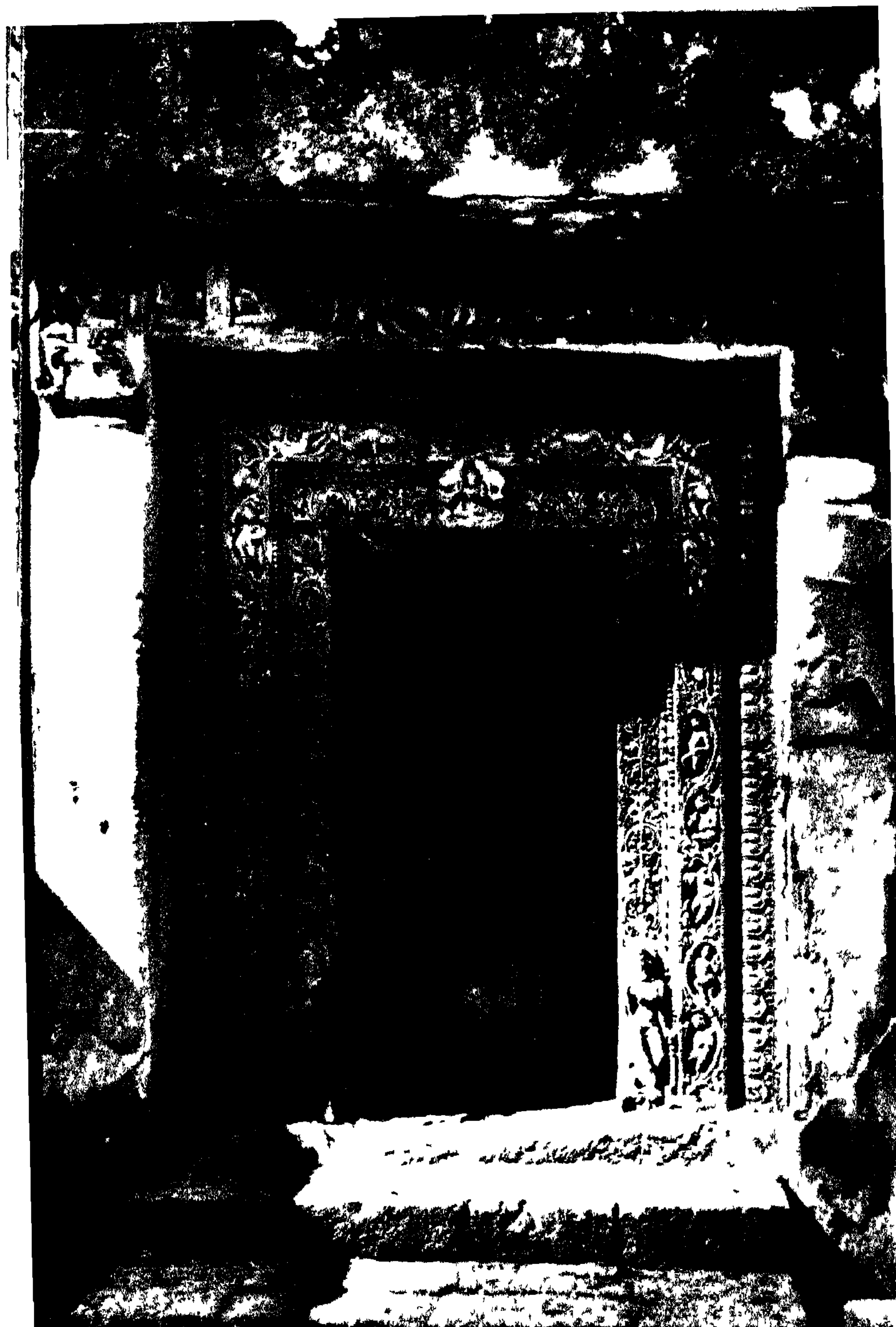


Plate 20 Mukhalingam Mukhalingeswara South door of main temple General view

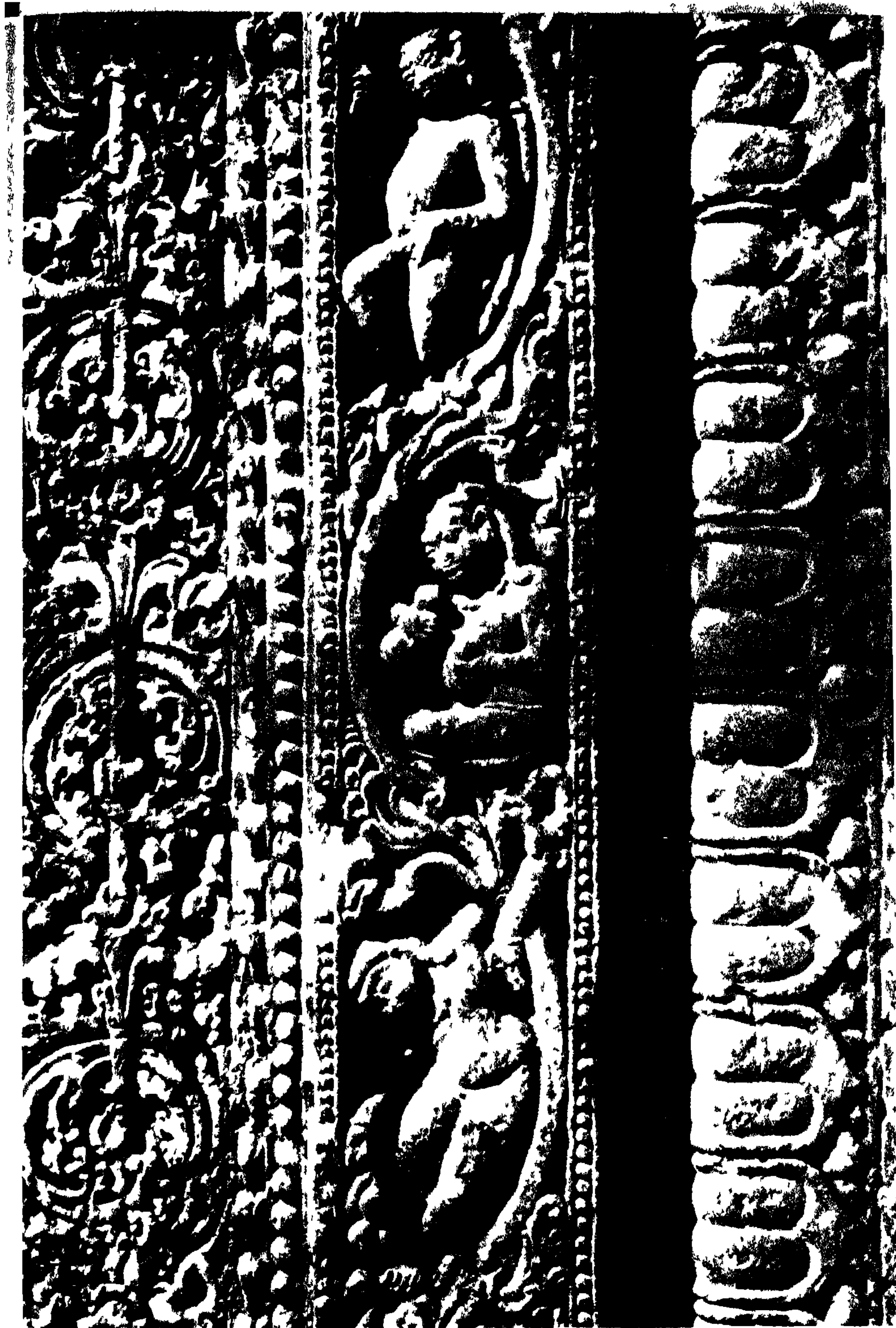


Plate 21 Mukhalingam Mukhalingeswara South door of main temple Detail



Plate 22 Mukhalingam Mukhalingesvara S E Shrine

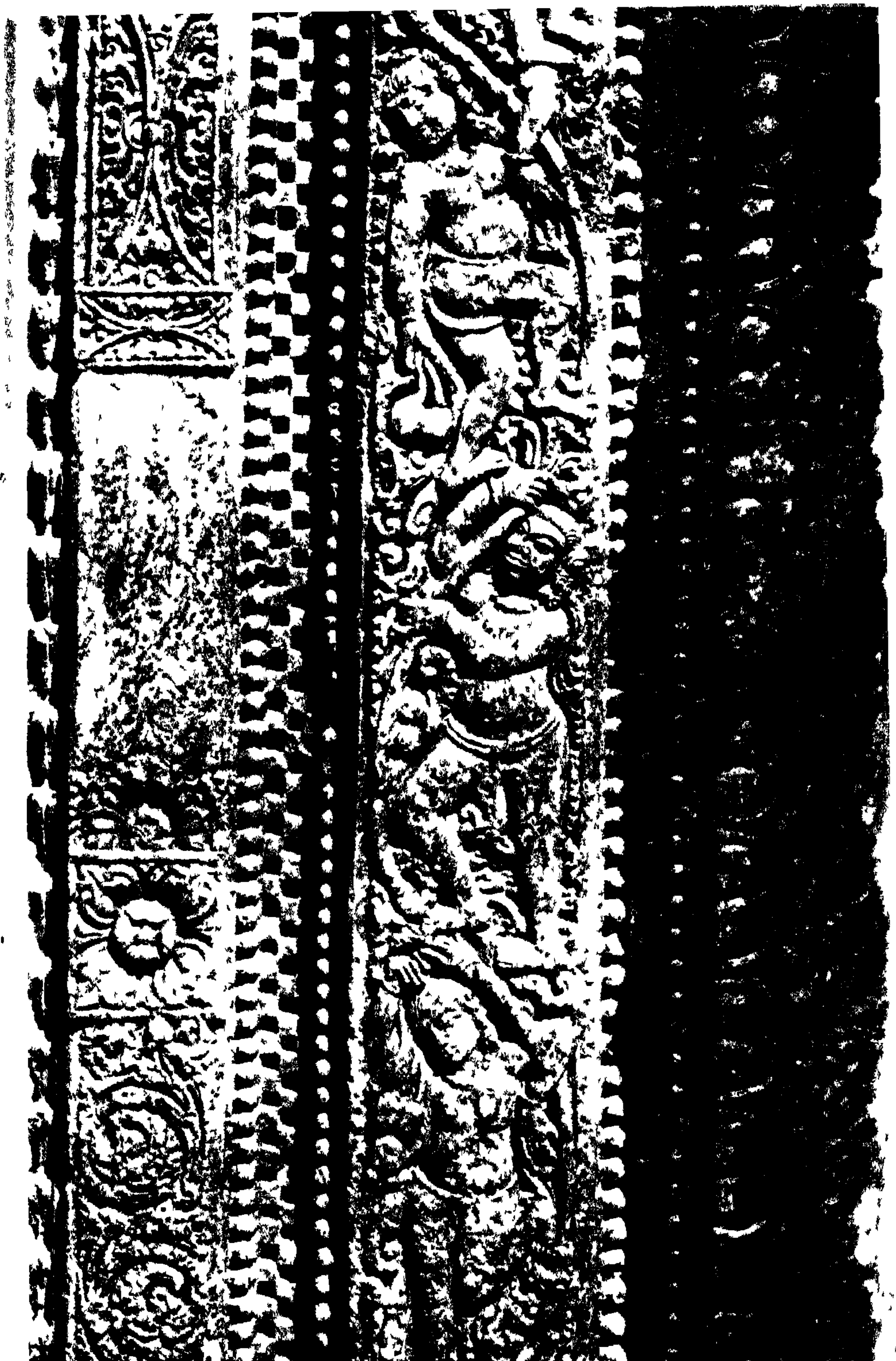


Plate 23 Mukhalingam Mukhalingeswara S E Shrine Detail of door



Plate 24 Mukhalingam Mukhalingeswara N F Shrine Detail of door



Plate 25 Mukhalingam Mukhalingesvara S E Shrine Warrior



Plate 26 Mukhalingam Mukhalingeswara Naga gargoyle

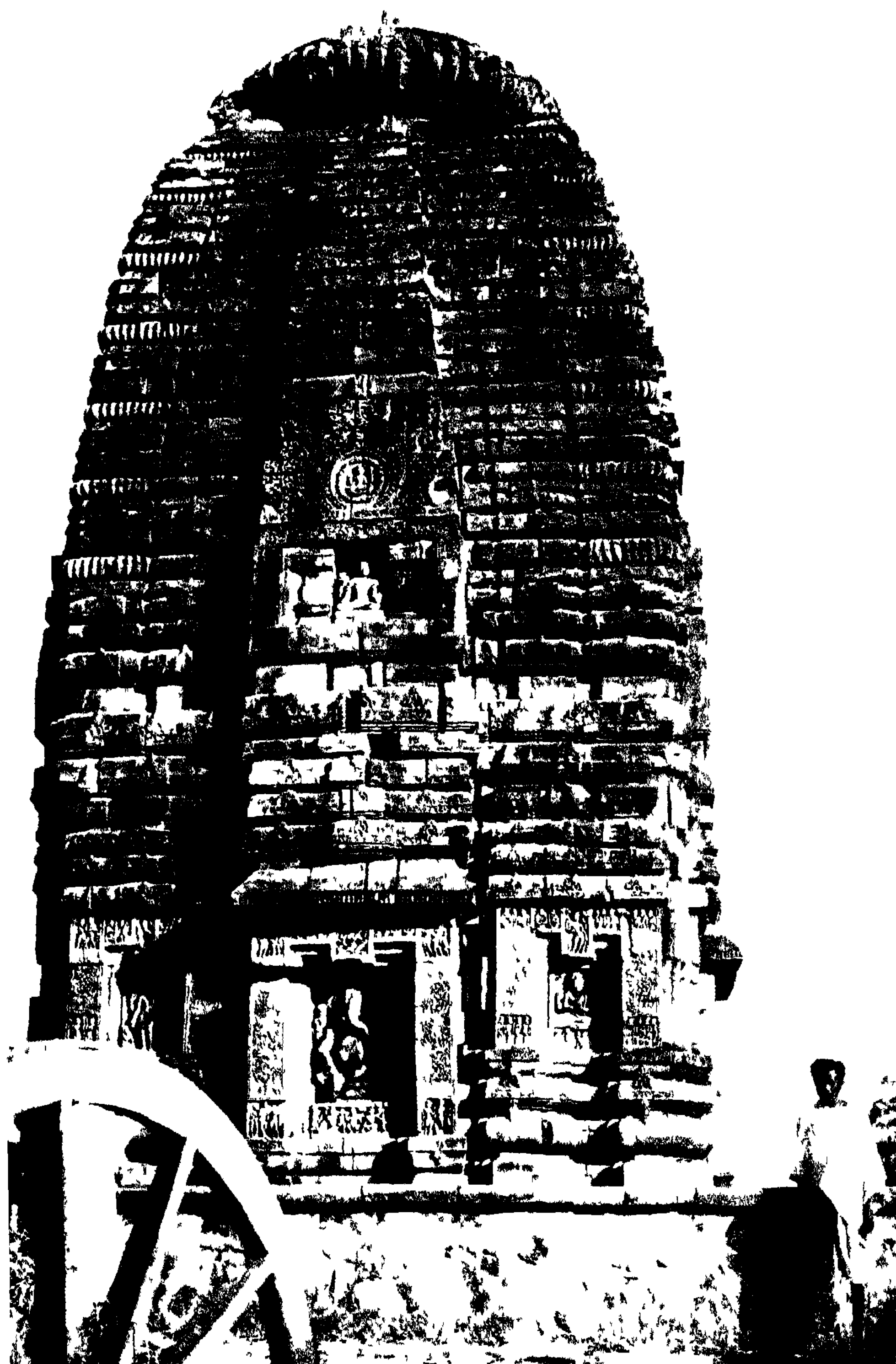


Plate 27 Mukhalingam Somesvara General view

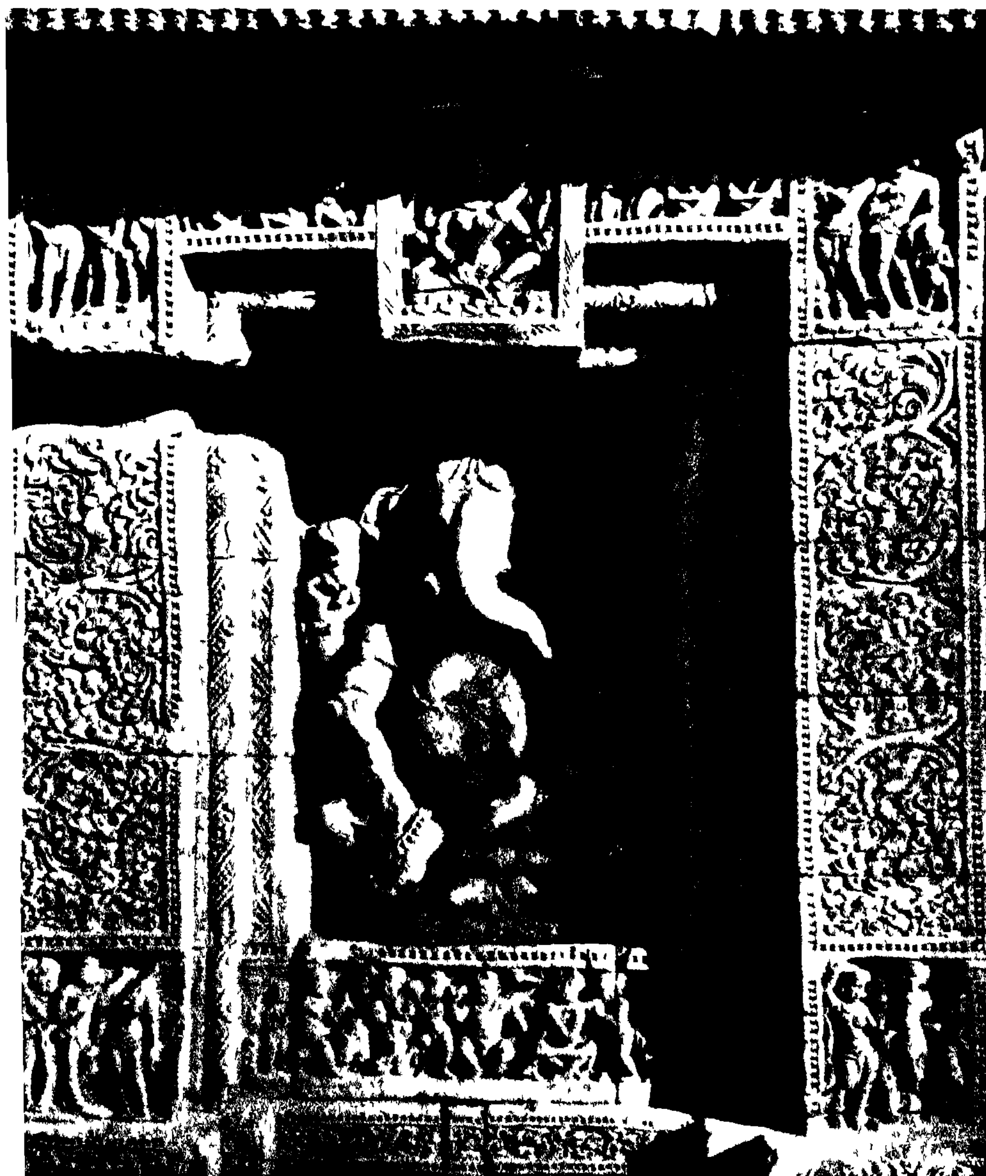


Plate 28 Mukhalingam Somesvara Main southern panel Ganesa



Plate 29 Mukhalingam Somesvara Main eastern panel Karttikeya

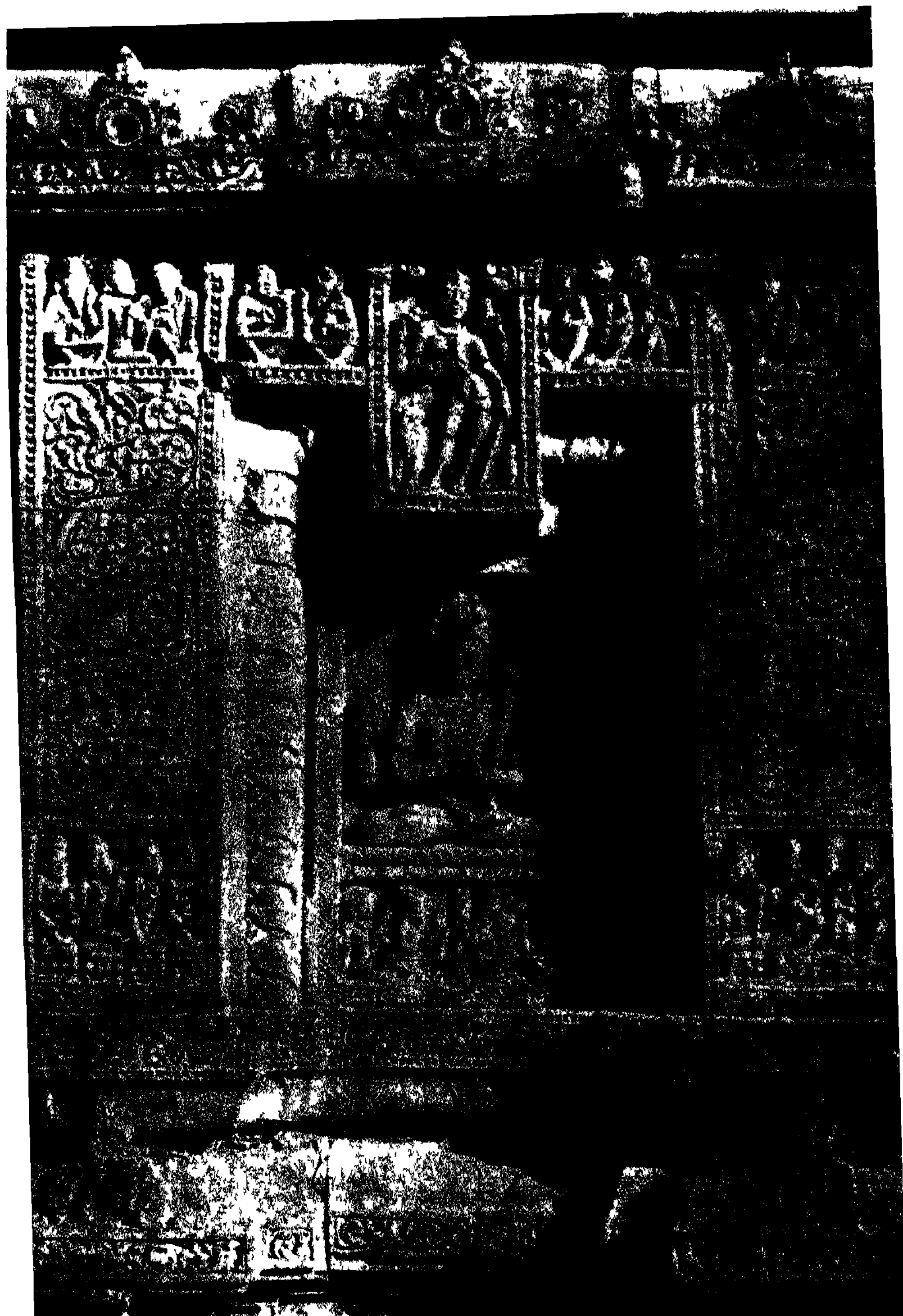


Plate 30 Mukhalingam Somesvara Panel to right of Plate 28 Lakulisa

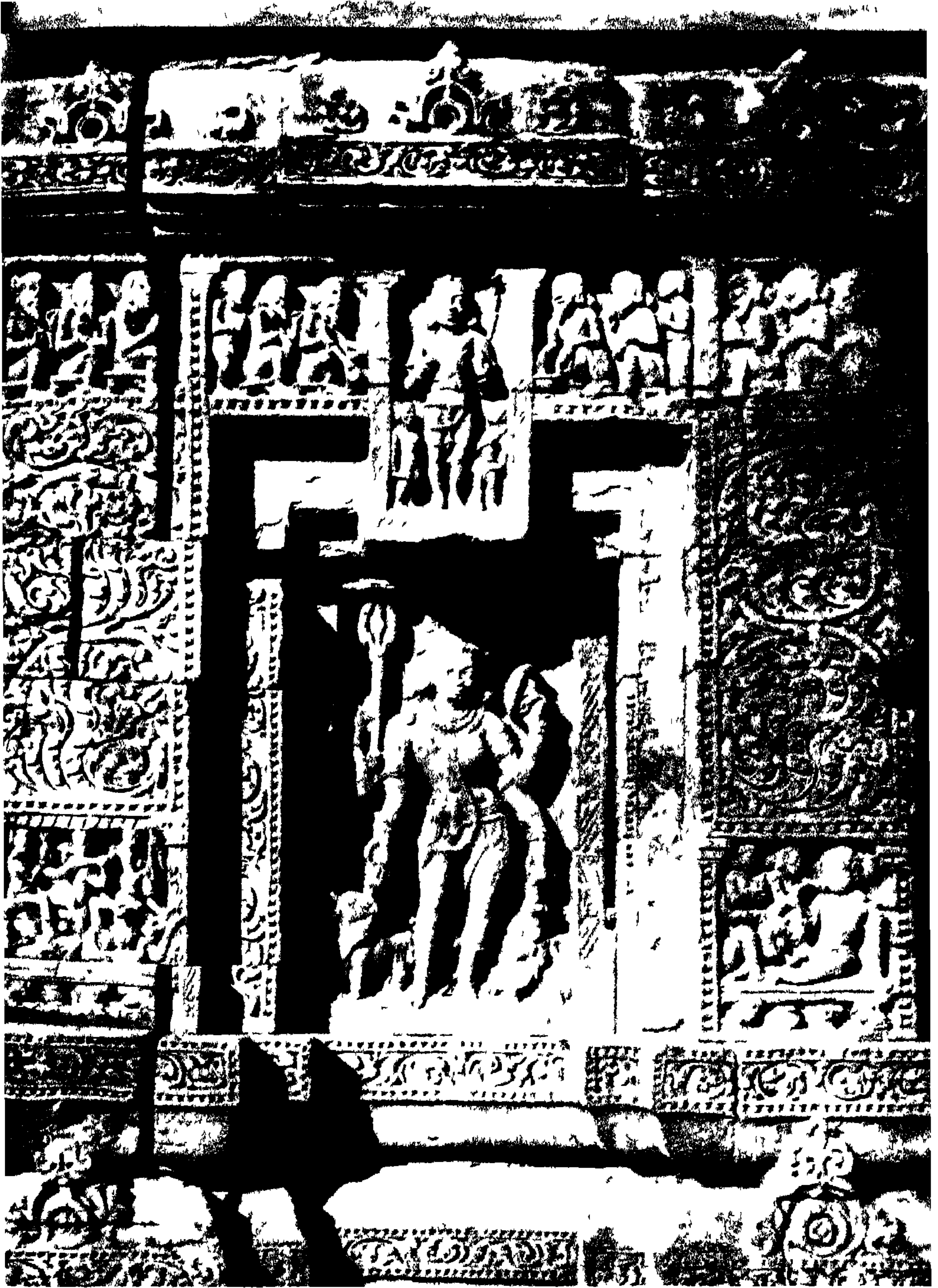


Plate 31 Mukhalingam Somesvara Panel to left of Plate 29 Ardhanarisvara



Plate 52 Mukhalingam Somesvara Main northern panel Detail



Plate 38 Mukhalingam Somesvara Detail of Plate 29



Plate 34 Mukhalingam Somesvara Panel left of door Yamuna



55 *Mukhalingam Someswara Panel right of door Ganga*



Plate 36 Mukhalingam Somesvara Left jamb of door Dvarapala

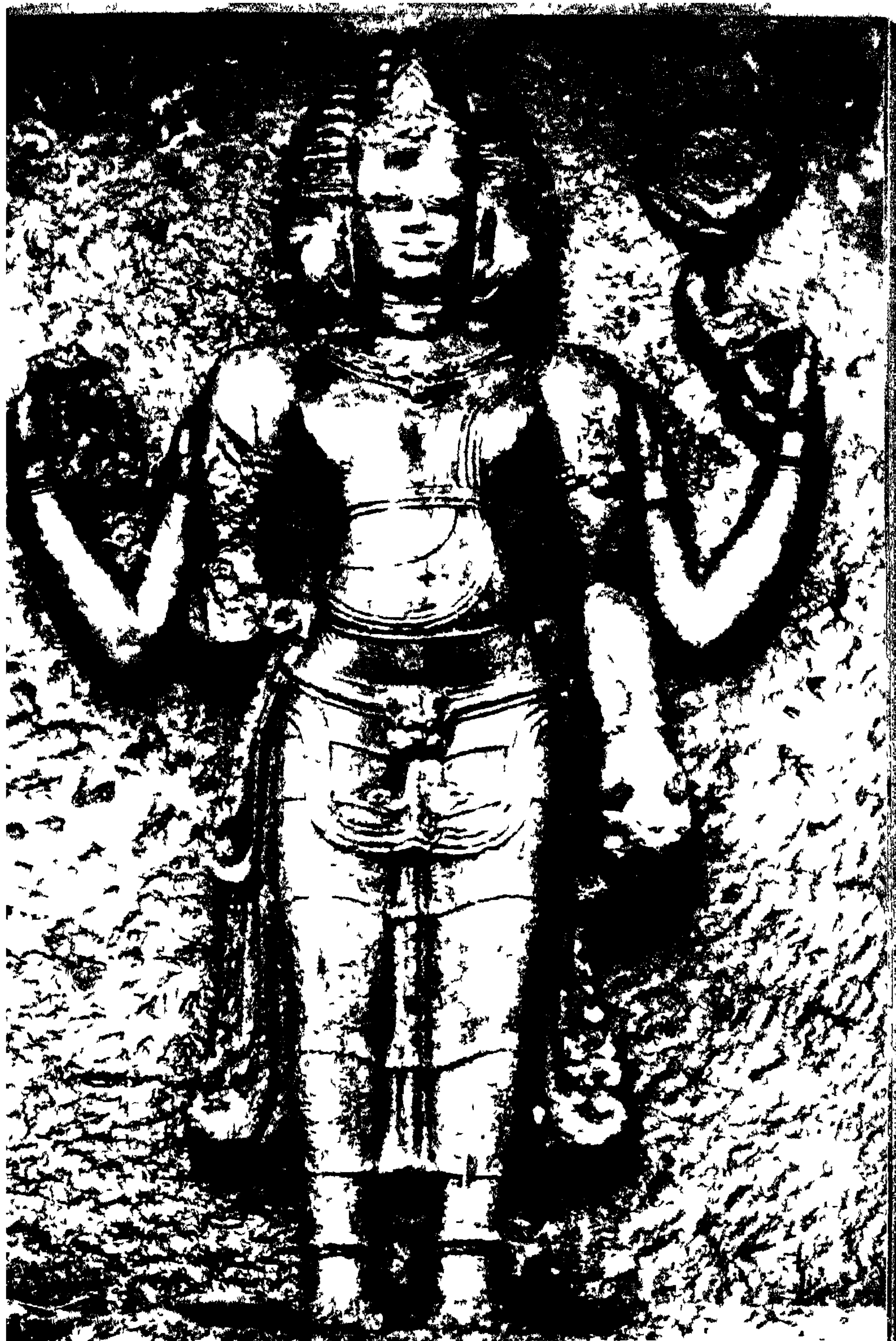


Plate 37 Mukhalingam Bhimesvara North wall of shrine Brahma

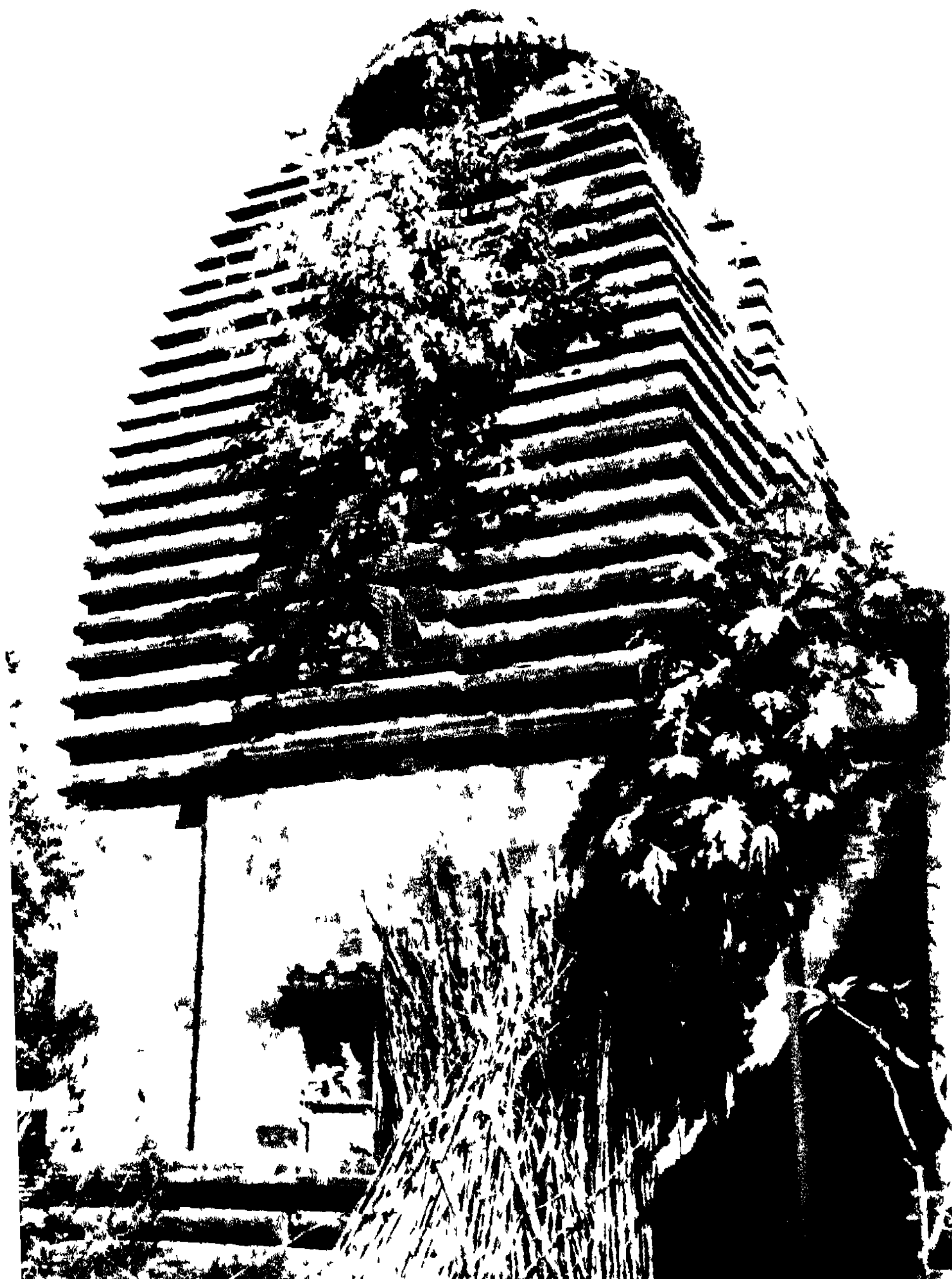


Plate 38 Mukhalingam Bhimesvara General view

SIRPUR

Plates 39–58



Plate 39 Sirpur Lakshmana Temple General view



Plate 40 Sirpur Lakshmana Temple False window



late 41 Sirpur Lakshmana Temple Door of Shrine



Plate 42 Sirpur Lakshmana Temple Door of Shrine detail



ite 43 Sirpur Lakshmana Temple Door of Shrine detail



Plate 44 Sirpur Lakshmana Temple Door of Shrine detail



ue 45 Sapta Lakshmana Temple Door of Shrine detail

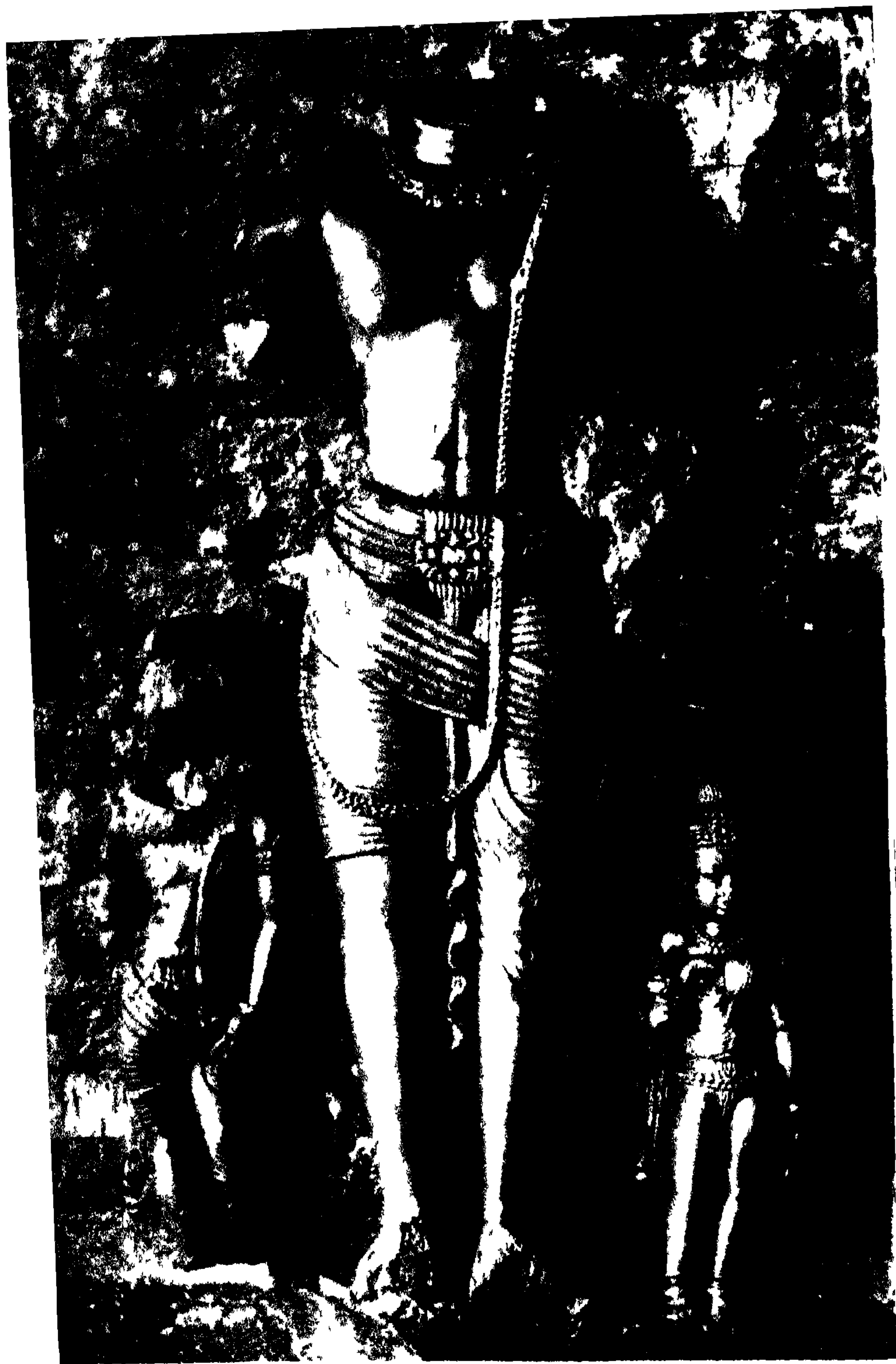


Plate 46 Supra Lakshmana Temple Vishnu



Plate 47 Sirpur Lakshmana Temple Naga



Plate 48 Sirpur Gandharesvara Temple Vishnu



P[illegible] 49 S[illegible]pu
Me[illegible] Temple
Medallion on door jambs

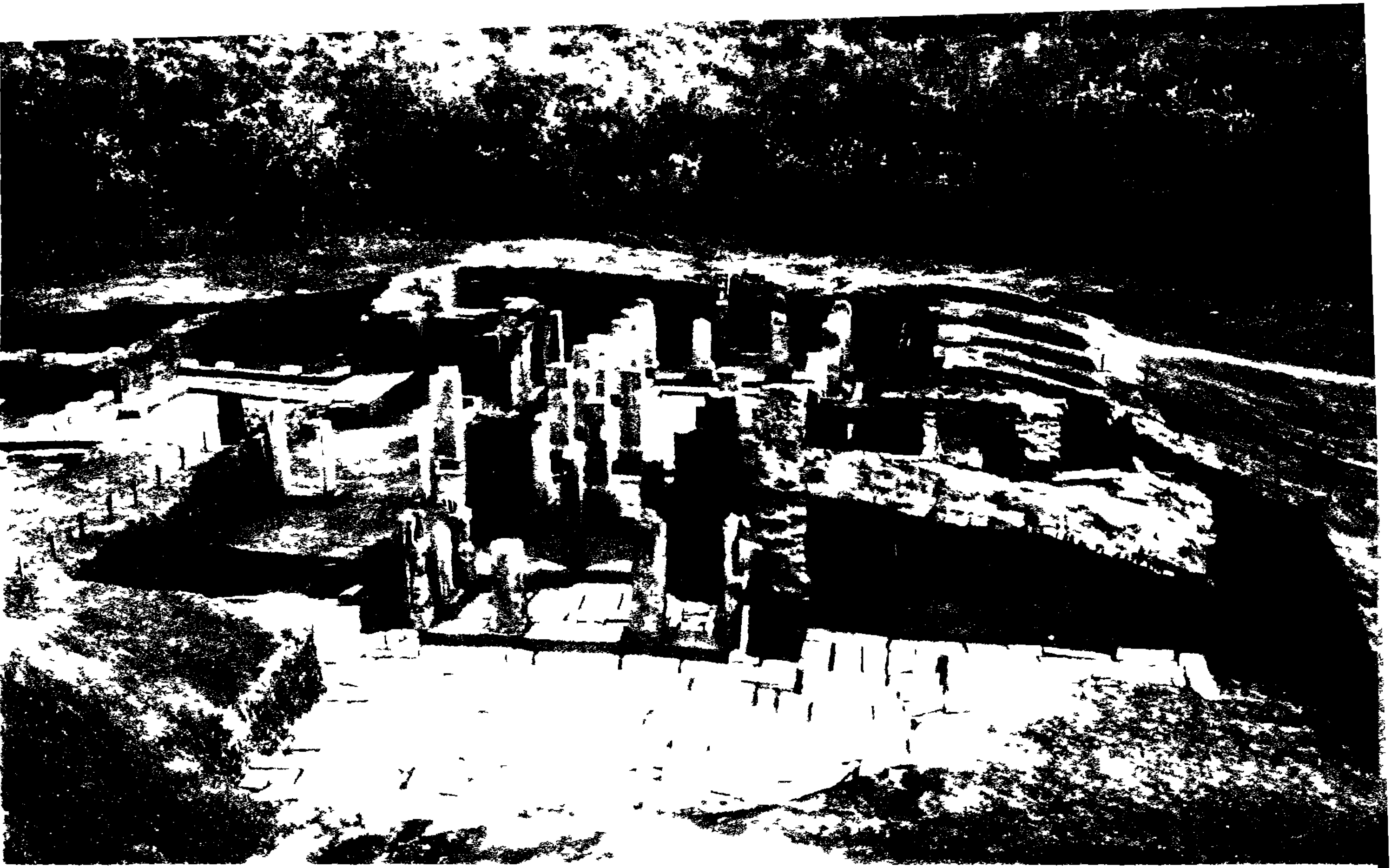


Plate 50 Sirpur Main Temple General view



Plate 51 Supin Main Temple Vestibule



Plate 52 Supin Main Temple Central Shrine

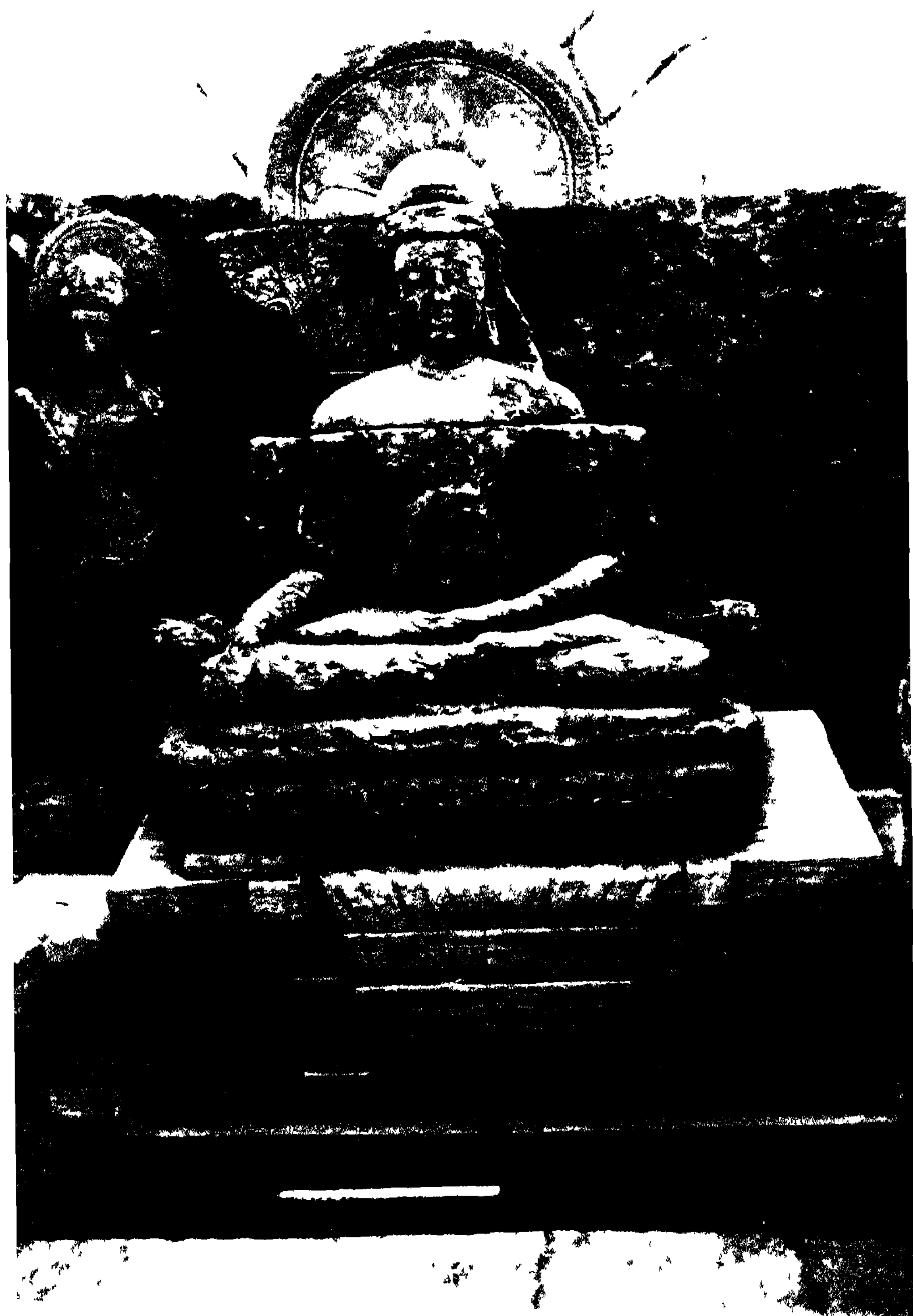
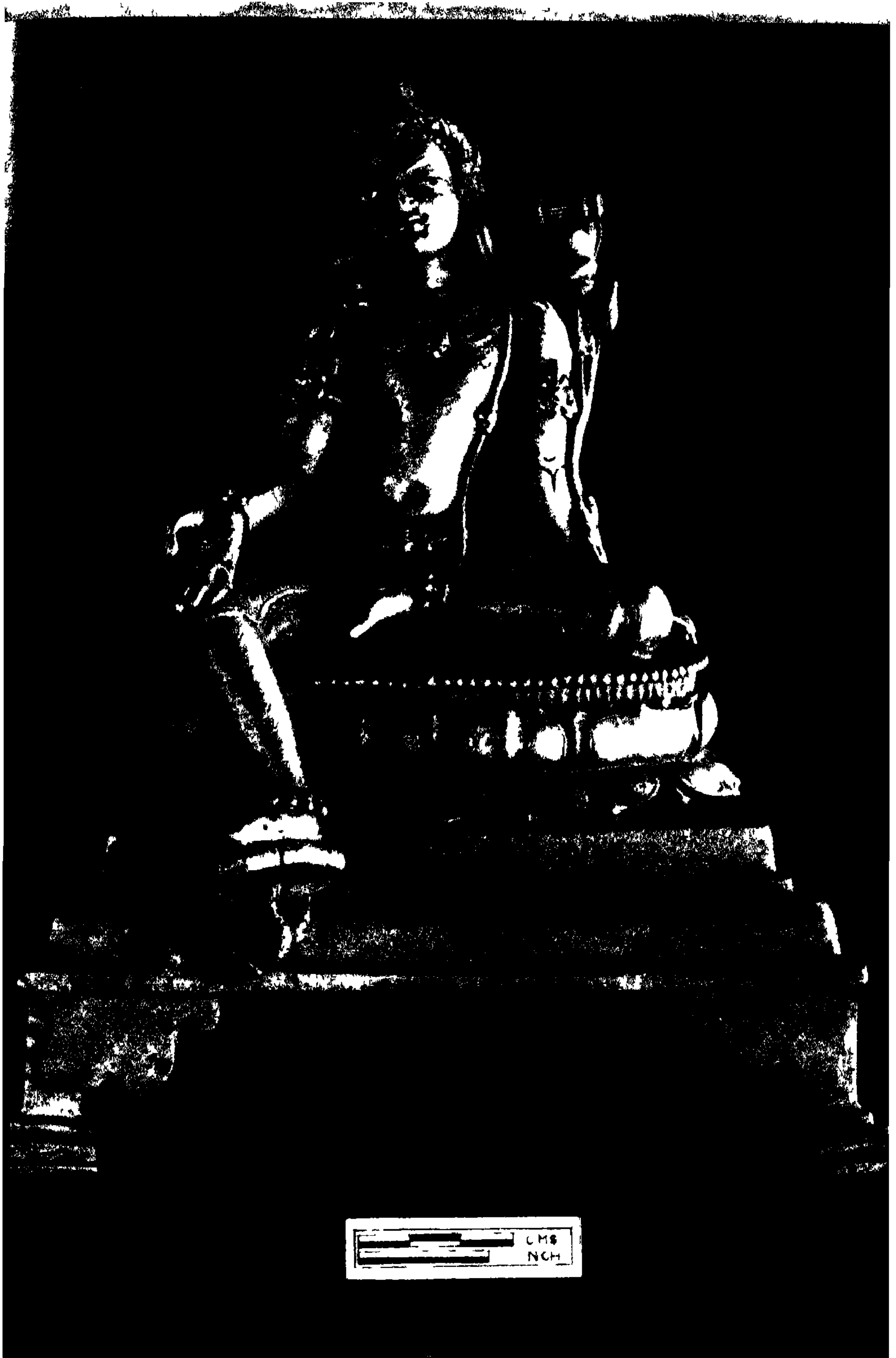


Plate 51 Sapta Swastika Monastery Central Shrine



Plate 54 Sirpur Manjusri Schist



late 55 Sapui Manjusri Inlaid bronze

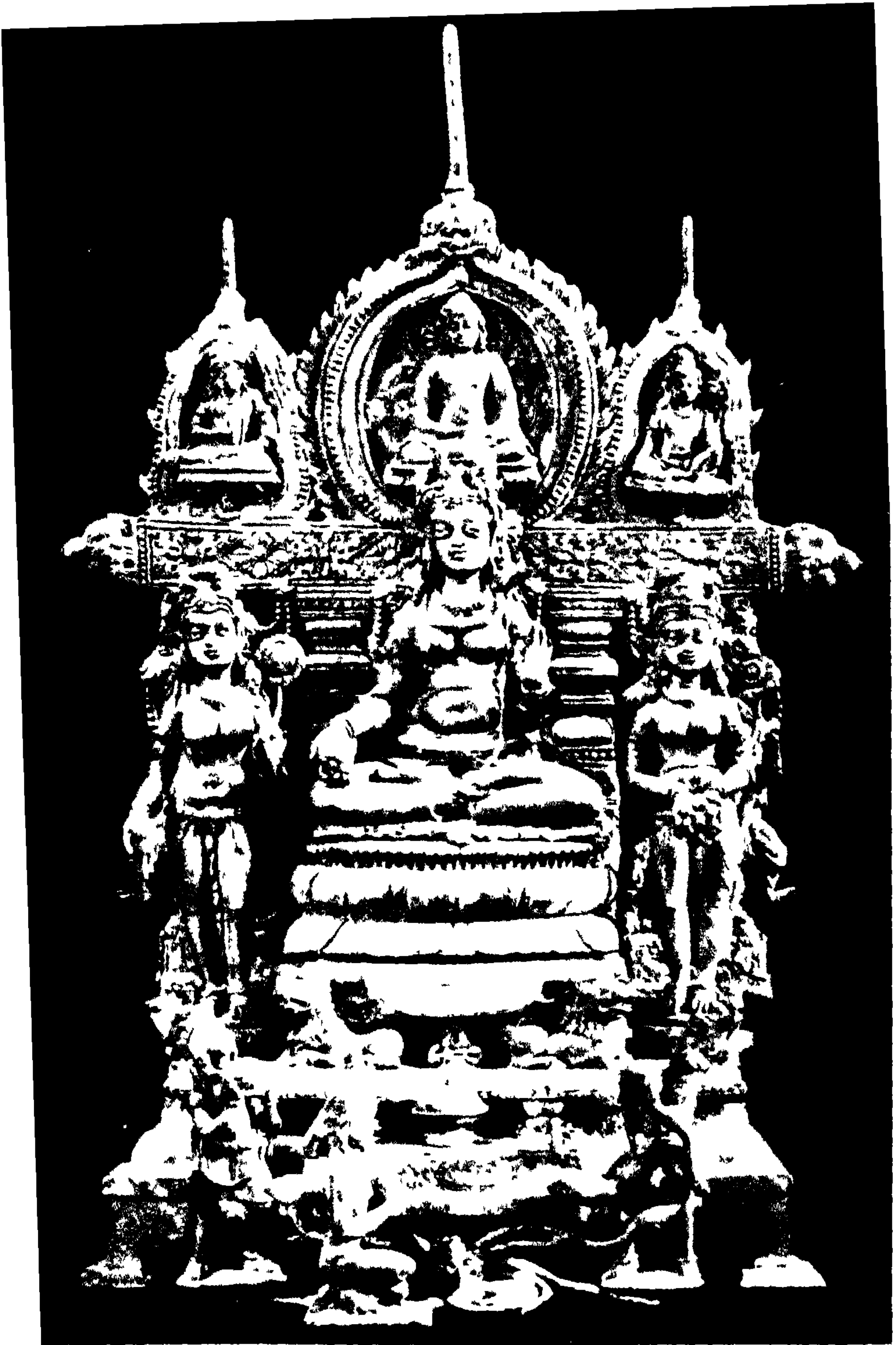


Plate 56 Sirpur Tara Inlaid bronze



Plate 57 Sirpur Vajrapani Inlaid bronze



Plate [illegible] Sopan Manjusri Inlaid bronze

RAJIM

Plates 59 – 83



Plate 59 Rajim Rajiva Lochana Door of main shrine



Plate 60 Rajim Rajiva Lochana Door of main shrine



Plate 61 Rajim Rajiva Lochana Door of main shrine



Plate 62 Rajim Rajiva Lochana Mandapam Pilaster figure (Face recut)

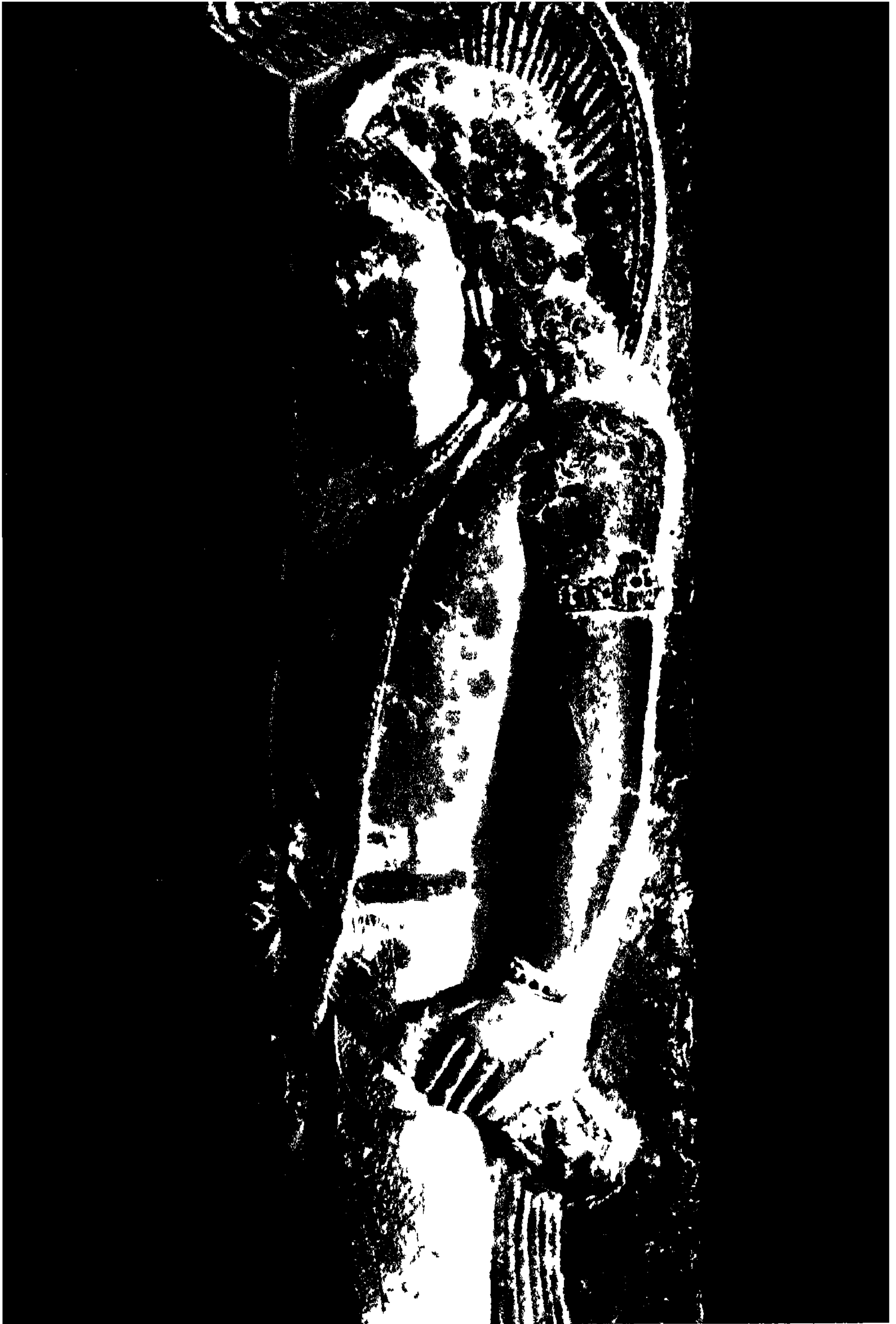


Plate 63 Rajim Rajiva Lochana Mandapam Pilaster figure



Plate 64 Rajim Rajiva Lochana Mandapam S W door



ate 65 Rajim Rajiva Lochana Mandapam S W door



Plate 66 Ranm Rajiva Lochana Mandapam S W door



Plate 67 Rajim Rajiva Lochana Western Gate



Plate 68 Rajim Rajiva Lochana Western Gate



69 Rajim Rajiva Lochana Western Gate



Plate 70 Rajim Rajiva Lochana Western Gate



late 71 Rapm Rajsa Lochana Western Gate



Plate 72 Rajim Rajiva Lochana Vamana



Plate 7[illegible] Rajim Rajiva Lochana Vishnu



Plate 74 Rajini Rajiva Lochana Narasimha



Plate 75 Rajim Rajiva Lochana Narasimha



Plate 76 Rajini Rajiva Lochana Trivikrama



Plate 77 Rajim Rajiva Lochana Trivikrama



Plate 78 Rajim Ramachandra Mandapam (Faces recut)



Plate 79 Rajim Ramachandra Mandapam (Face recut)



Plate 80 Rajah Ramachandra Mandapam (Face recut)

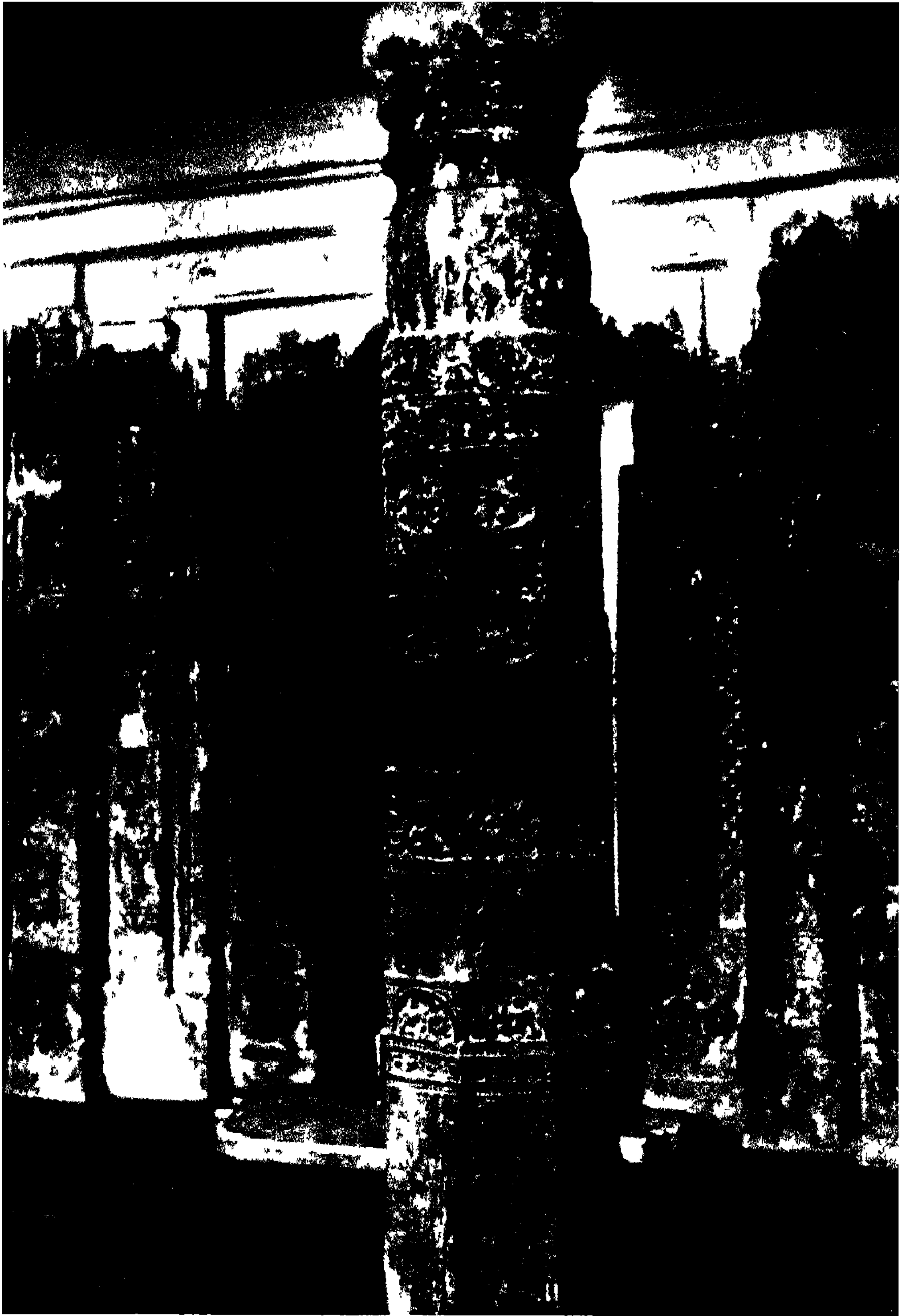


Plate 81 Rajim Ramachandra Mandapam



Plate 82 Rajim Rajiva Lochana Western Gate



Plate 83 Rajim
Rajiva Lochana
General view